Resisting War and Preparation for War: Taking Back Militarised Spaces

This issue of The Broken Rifle looks at actions against sites such as military bases, weapons production plants and state borders, and the role that they play in the preparation and implementation of war and militarism.

In July 1934, Bart de Ligt proposed to the International Conference of War Resisters' International a Plan of Campaign Against All War and All Preparation of War. The proposal included a long list of actions to undertake against war and preparation of war, divided into two main sections: actions in peace and actions in wartime, with the subdivisions of individual and collective action. More than 50 years later, in 1987, it was a central focus for a WRI seminar - Refusing War Preparations: Non-cooperation and Conscientious Objection. I think it is about time for WRI to update this list.

I am writing as we prepare for an international action in the UK as part of the Action AWE campaign, which focuses on campaigning against Britain's renewal of the Trident nuclear weapon system. As Angie Zelter says in her article, these are crucial times for campaigning against nuclear weapons in the UK as "In 2016 the UK government will finalise the decision to build a new nuclear weapons system to replace the present Trident system". A disarmament camp will take place at AWE Burghfield which is responsible for the complex final assembly and maintenance of the warheads of nuclear weapons while in service, as well as their decommissioning. This campaign resonates with one of de Ligt's proposed actions: "On the occasion of parliamentary decision or special governmental measures (such as a vote for the increase and the modernization of war material, manoeuvres, dispatch of military naval forces to a place where a strained situation has arisen, dispatch of military forces to some colony), to prevent such measures from being carried out by demonstrations and strikes."

Action AWE is primarily about carrying out direct action against the establishments where nuclear weapons are developed and produced. De Ligt's proposals also include action "To disorganize as much as possible the great mechanism of war, chiefly by seeking to paralyse transport" and "Wherever it is possible to do so without the risk of endangering human life, arms, munitions and all war materials should be destroyed, etc., etc." and for the "Organization of international itinerary peace crusades".

On 2 September there will be a big blockade of AWE Burghfield with activists from several European countries, building on international cooperation of war resisters.

War resisters have developed over the years a rich and diverse repertoire of actions against war and its preparation. Many of these actions fall under the list proposed by de Ligt, however, as times and warfare change, so does how we carry out our actions. When de Ligt presented his proposal there was nothing like an online petition or social media campaign. As communication was slower, calling for immediate international solidarity actions would reach very few people compared to today. The continued on page 2
sophistication of some of today’s direct actions would have been unthinkable at the time, and that these actions could be reported and broadcast live as they are happening to the whole world was just science-fiction. These are times of immediateness and overload of information. Nowadays the message you want to convey has to fit within the 140 characters of Twitter, and if you can catch one moment of someone’s attention, that’s already success. It is time that as war resisters we come up with a 21st Century Campaign Against All War and Preparation of All War.

However, even though warfare is changing (in particular with the roboticisation and privatisation of war) the military still depends on some basic pillars that support it. You need people to fight (fewer and fewer though), a war infrastructure (bases, equipment), a war economy (money for war from taxes, private investments, etc.) and a war discourse (war propaganda). As war resisters we try to tackle all of these pillars, but we also know that some are easier or more effective to target. Over the course of the years, carrying out actions at particular places has been a common approach, as it is something tangible you can target. It is likely that if you have a military base, a weapons factory or any other military related place near you, it has seen some form of protest.

As you will read in this issue of The Broken Rifle the impact of places such as military bases, weapons factories, barracks, and also militarised state borders are immense. Not only are these the places from where wars are fought - and an essential part of the them-versus-us war discourse - but also the devastation caused to the areas where they are situated is also immeasurable. Once again in this issue, we look at Diego Garcia, where a whole population was displaced so that the could island be used as a military base, and Okinawa, whose people and their environment have suffered from decades of militarisation. In this issue we also include an article on the so called “war on drugs” in Mexico and the militarisation of the US-Mexico border, where violence has reached unprecedented levels. However, in all of these cases you find people resisting the violence and militarisation and working for peaceful alternatives.

One aspect not properly covered in this newsletter is the one of conversion. It is important that when resisting sites like military bases that there is also a proposed alternative on how these places should be used. There are many examples of old military barracks converted into schools, museums, public houses, etc. If you are ever in Ljubljana, visit Metelkova Autonomous Social Centre - formerly the northern headquarters of the Yugoslav People's Army but, at the initiative of then WRI Council member Marko Hren, taken over 20 years ago and converted into a centre with performance spaces, craft workshops, and studios. With good visual imagination and materials - bright paints, balls of wool or thread - you can easily carry out actions where you can change the meaning of an existing military sites. In 2011 as part of the War Starts Here antimilitarist European campaign, many groups painted tanks and other military equipment in bright pink. Or think of the images on the Israeli Separation Wall (and not just those ‘copyrighted’ by Banksy).

There are many actions you can do against war and preparation of war. Blockading - as we will do on 2 September - an establishment for nuclear weapons production is just one of them. Let's continue expanding our repertoire and jointly come up with a new plan against all war and all preparation of war.

Javier Garate

South Africa conference: less than a year to go!

Small Actions, Big Movements: The Continuum of Nonviolence, the WRI's International Conference co-hosted by the Ceasefire Campaign, will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, 4 - 8 July 2014. The other supporting organisations in South Africa are Embrace Dignity, working against the exploitation of prostitution and sex-trafficking, and the Action Support Centre, based in Soweto, which is the African regional hub of a global network of organisations and individuals committed to transforming conflict. Registration for the conference will open in September.

Thematically, there is a special reason for holding a conference on the continuum of nonviolence in Africa. For historical and social reasons, much of the work on nonviolence in Africa focuses on the more ‘local’ parts of the continuum: on street violence, domestic violence, small arms. This neatly complements the greater focus by peace movements outside Africa, and especially in the Global North, on the more ‘global’ parts of the continuum, such as resistance to war and international military alliances. It is precisely the connection between these different levels and forms of resistance that the conference seeks to bring to light. This connection will be fruitful and valuable for all.

Please get in touch with us at info@wri-irg.org, if you are interested in participating and collaborating in this important event.
A Call for Action at AWE Burghfield 26th August to 7th September 2013

In 2016 the UK government will finalise the decision to build a new nuclear weapons system to replace the present Trident system. The nuclear submarines that carry Trident are getting old, so the government has pledged to finalise contracts to replace them in 2016 in order to build a new generation of nuclear weapons at an estimated cost of £76–100 billion. This is more than the current planned public spending cuts of £81 billion. If the contracts go ahead, the warheads would be designed and manufactured at AWE (Atomic Weapons Establishment) Aldermaston and Burghfield, in Berkshire, about 50 miles west of London.

Such a replacement and modernisation of a nuclear weapon system would be illegal and undermine international law as it breaches the commitment to nuclear disarmament that all nuclear weapon states made under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The world is in a very dangerous situation caused by the long delay in implementing Article VI of the NPT. As the UN General-Secretary Ban Ki-moon recently said, “Delay comes with a high price tag. The longer we procrastinate, the greater the risk that these weapons will be used, will proliferate or be acquired by terrorists. But our aim must be more than keeping the deadliest of weapons from ‘falling into the wrong hands’. There are no right hands for wrong weapons……. I urge all nuclear-armed States to reconsider their national nuclear posture. Nuclear deterrence is not a solution to international peace and stability. It is an obstacle.”

It is not just the General-Secretary getting frustrated with the nuclear weapon states. The majority non-nuclear states are now actively campaigning for an international treaty to ban all nuclear weapons. “Three in four governments support the idea of a treaty to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons.”

However, unless there is a massive movement, including nonviolent direct action, by civil society, all the nuclear weapon states will modernise and replace their nuclear arsenals and more states will build their own. The bad example of the original 5 nuclear weapon states (USA, Russia, France, China and the UK) continuing to depend on nuclear weapons has not only encouraged Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea to acquire them but is inciting ever more states to join in.

In the UK, anti-nuclear activists (including those who supported Trident Ploughshares and Faslane 365) helped galvanise public opposition to Trident. This succeeded to the extent that the present Scottish Government have promised to ban all nuclear weapons from Scotland if the Scots vote for independence in the Referendum (to be held in 2014) and they come to power in the new nation. It is important now that there is a special focus on the English dimension – the atomic weapon establishments at Aldermaston and Burghfield. If we succeed here then the potential for world-wide disarmament is great. Once the UK abandons its reliance on nuclear weapons we can expect a ‘good domino’ effect to cascade around the world.

A new grass-roots campaign called Action AWE (Atomic Weapons Eradication) has recently formed to take up this struggle and to combine the strengths of as many peace and justice groups as possible. Not only UK groups but also European groups, including those in Germany, are being asked to join this campaign and come and help out. Action AWE is dedicated to halting nuclear weapons production at the Atomic Weapons Establishment factories at Aldermaston and Burghfield. Groups and individuals started organising their own autonomous actions and events from February 2013, when the Campaign launched. They are raising awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and exerting political pressure for Britain to end the production, replacement and deployment of Trident and to join other countries in negotiating a global treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

Trident Ploughshares is one of the groups supporting Action AWE and they are organising a 2 week International Disarmament Camp at Burghfield from 26th August to the 7th September 2013. There will be a Big Blockade of Burghfield on Monday 2nd September to which all readers are invited.

AWE Burghfield is responsible for the complex final assembly and maintenance of the nuclear warheads and is the base from which the nuclear warhead and nuclear materials convoys depart when moving nuclear warheads between AWE and Coulport in Scotland for storage and servicing. It is a vital part of the nuclear chain and is much less well known than Aldermaston which is closely linked and only 7 miles away. Burghfield has only 2 gates and is ripe for nonviolent direct action.

The two weeks disarmament camp will provide an opportunity for peaceful responsible people to carry out lots of direct disarmament work at Burghfield and more detailed information and maps on these two nuclear bases can be found at http://actionawe.org/topics/cks-nuclear-weapons/atomic-weapons-establishment/

The camp is open to anti-nuclear activists from other European countries who will be joining the camp for as long as they wish though most will be arriving in time for the Big Blockade on September 2nd. Groups from the European Anti-militarist Network will be joining the camp which will provide a supportive environment where we can strengthen our ability to work well.
Diego Garcia: The Biggest Military Base in Africa

The Island states of Africa often get forgotten. The word “the continent” somehow leaves them out. And this is a serious conceptual error when it comes to scrutinizing the US military presence in Africa.

Let’s take things step-by-step.

The Republic of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean is part of Africa. So, any military base on Mauritius territory is therefore in Africa and, as such, concerns us for the coming War Resistors’ International meeting in 2014.

The Chagos Archipelago is part of Mauritius. So, any military base on Chagos is therefore in Africa.

The Island of Diego Garcia is part of the Chagos Archipelago. So, any military base on Diego Garcia is therefore in Africa.

There is, in fact, a huge US military base on Diego Garcia. Thus in Africa. And resisting war includes resisting the permanent structures of war, which is what military bases are. Diego Garcia’s military base is a particularly odious one, controlled as it is from far away from Africa, and hidden as it is from any democratic control whatsoever.

How come so few people in Africa even care so much as consider this military base on Diego Garcia as concerning Africa, let alone being in Africa? And who ought to have democratic control over it? Do the people of the US know what goes on there in their name? What atrocities committed from it, or on it? How did Mauritians lose democratic control over Diego Garcia, even before they got it? Are Mauritians concerned? Are we in Africa, as a whole, concerned?

Here are some of the answers. Many of them, in turn, provoke further conundrums. All pose the question of democratic control over African land. This is important because it is democratic control that will allow us to end war.

Africa’s De-Colonization not yet complete

As all British colonies were moving towards independence in the 1960’s, the British Government, a Labour one at that, behind the backs of its own people, stole some Islands from its two Indian Ocean colonies, Mauritius and Seychelles, and, consciously moving in a direction counter to the historical process of decolonization, set up a brand new colony with these stolen Islands. The bizarre name of this anachronism is the “British Indian Ocean Territories”, or BIOT for short. BIOT was never recognized by anyone except its diabolical creators. Seychelles later claimed back, and quite naturally got back, its Islands. The UN declared the annexation of Mauritian territory by Britain illegal. OAU and Non-Aligned Movement resolutions confirmed and reconfirmed this logical stand. But, it all remained outside of the knowledge of the broad masses of any people, except the Mauritian people. I can bear witness to the fact that in the 1970s, when I spoke about this issue to well-informed political activists from all over the world, including from Britain, Tanzania, South Africa and the US, they at first thought I was fantasizing. Only professional diplomats knew about the base. They knew because of the repeated resolutions in all the international forums.

The British State, as its empire closed down, was not acting alone.

As you will have guessed, it was acting in cahoots with the expanding US military. Their shameful joint acts were cloaked in organized secrecy that has been called a “conspiracy” by the British High Court in an important judgment in the Bancoult case in 2000.

Forced de-Population of part of Mauritius

Together Britain and the US Government proceeded to “depopulate” these Mauritian Islands, the entire Chagos Archipelago, including the main island, Diego Garcia. Diego Garcia had been the

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Nuclear weapons are linked to every major economic, health, environmental, humanitarian, moral and political issue facing us today, including climate change, militarism, poverty and insecurity. You can find a number of linking essays at http://actionawe.org/essays-3/

The global movement for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons is gathering pace. NOW IS THE TIME for all of us to get involved and take AWESome action against replacing Britain’s nuclear weapons. We can be creative, inspired, imaginative and daring. People power creates change. So, bring your tent, your passion and commitment and join us to stop the next generation of nuclear weapons from being built.

For more about ACTION AWE, how it links to your campaigns, and how you can take part, please visit our website: www.ActionAWE.org or telephone 0845-458-88362 or contact Angies at info@actionawe.org

Angie Zelter

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most beautiful of all the pristine atolls in all the world’s turquoise-blue oceans. The people who had lived there for 200 years were tricked, starved and ultimately forced off the Islands. Their dogs were gassed by British and US military personnel, before the very eyes of their loving carers. As a warning. The men, women and children were then herded on board ships and down into their holds, transported across the sea to main Island Mauritius, and dumped on the docks. They were left to their own devises there, in the capital, Port Louis, where working people were, themselves, right then caught up in the vortex of the “race wars” or communal violence provoked by the anti-independence party. There was mass fleeing in different directions, and there was the “separating out” that happens during ethnic violence, as what was once “a community” splits. There was a State of Emergency. British troops kept curfew. Independence had to be declared at midday, instead of midnight. For security reasons. The poor of Port Louis were scared, jobless and hungry. And it was they who took in the Chagossians. Chagossians, who were not only completely penniless and dispossessed, but disoriented, and living in that kind of confused mourning that only mass displacement produces. A sadness that often leads to death.

The US Military Base

All these crimes were committed so recently, not in the days of the Conquistadores, not even 200 years ago. They were committed in cold blood in our lifetimes in order to set up a military base on African land. It is our responsibility as Africans to get the base closed down.

The crimes continue to multiply

And the crimes have multiplied. Diego Garcia has become a nuclear base. Nuclear submarines are even serviced there, once they had to be removed from Italy following demonstrations there. The illegal bombing of Baghdad with the Orwellian name “Shock and Awe” used Diego Garcia as thrampleine for many of its B-52 sorties. Civilians were just wiped out in the midst of an advertisement for the fire-works of armaments. A wedding procession in Afghanistan was annihilated, an entire extended family wiped out, in an attack that set off from Diego Garcia. Illegal renditions took place on Diego Garcia. These were denied until the lies and denial could finally no longer be maintained. The admission came in the British Parliament.

Pelindaba Treaty

And now as the Treaty for a Nuclear Arms Free Africa, the Pelindaba Treaty, comes into force for the first time, where does this put Diego Garcia? The African Committee on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) has been set up. Its offices are supposed to have been set up in South Africa. Have they? If so, does anyone know where they are? The short answer to the question of the military base is that it is now illegal for an additional reason. The treaty is a binding one. The base thus needs to be closed down. However, there was the question of the “dotted lines” around Chagos in the map that goes with the Treaty. These dotted lines refer to the fact that Chagos is Mauritain territory, thus part of Africa, but that the Chagos is militarily occupied by the UK and US.

Britain’s hoax on the Ecologist NGOs and its Marine Protected Area

In 2010, Britain concocted a new conspiracy around Chagos, a conspiracy neatly exposed by WikiLeaks Cables, thanks to the whistle-blowing of Julian Assange. This conspiracy was to set up a “Marine Protected Area” around Chagos while ignoring the nuclear base there, and while pretending that the BIOT was part of UK territory. The Mauritian State has hauled Britain before the tribunals of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and has won the first battle: to get the case heard.

Movements in Mauritius Against the Military Base on Diego Garcia

There has long been a strong movement in Mauritius for the triple aim: close the base, de-colonize the whole of Mauritius, re-unify the country and its people and give proper reparations to all those displaced and their families. LALIT is part of this movement.

2014: New lease between UK and US

The original lease agreement between UK and US – illegal as it always been –expires in 2016. The expiring lease states that negotiations for an extension should begin in 2014. So, LALIT has helped set up a common front called the “Diego Committee”. In July 2013, it has begun a campaign of posters, leaflets and neighbourhood meetings, to build up to a new challenge to force the Mauritian Government to act against the UK for illegal occupation, and to call for the closure of the military base.

We want to join forces with everyone in Africa who wants to close down US and other military bases, keep AFRICOM (The US’s Africa Command) out of Africa altogether, and also to find out what the US Embassy’s “State of Forces Agreement” (SOFA) outlines for each country in Africa. We have to fight the military encroachment, inch by inch. In Mauritius, the Diego Committee has just launched a boycott call to all associations and other civil society organizations of US money.

Lindsey Collen
Member of LALIT in Mauritius
Resisting war and the preparation for war

Okinawa: Militarised Islands

Okinawa, the southernmost prefecture of Japan, consisting of some 160 islands with a population of approximately 1.4 million, is known as kichi no shima or military base islands. While Okinawa consists of only 0.6% of all the Japanese landmass, 74% of US military bases in Japan are concentrated in the prefecture. At present, further militarisation of Okinawa is taking place and Okinawan people are putting up a stern opposition to it. With a brief background of the militarisation of Okinawa, I would like to highlight two recent developments: the construction of a US military airport in the Henoko/Oura Bay area and the construction of six helipads at Takae in Yanbaru Forest.

Background

During the final phase of World War II, Okinawa became a fierce battleground. The Battle of Okinawa killed thousands of Okinawans and destroyed the environment upon which people’s livelihoods had depended. After the war, Okinawa was placed under US military occupational government for the following 27 years. In the 1950s, when the Cold War in Asia escalated, US military base construction began in Okinawa. With “bayonets and bulldozers”, the US military government took away Okinawan people’s land and converted it into military bases and training areas. Since then, US military training and operations have been threatening and violating the safety and the human rights of the Okinawan people, and degrading the environment of Okinawa, even after the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972.

In 1995, the raping of an Okinawan girl by US servicemen outraged the Okinawan public, and Okinawa appeared to be heading towards demilitarisation. Throughout Okinawa, protest rallies were held against the US military bases and a prefectural referendum was passed to call for a reduction of the US military presence on Okinawa. Reacting to the exploding situation, the Japanese and US governments established the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) to “reduce the burden”.

The SACO proposed several plans, including the return of the US Futenma Marine Air Station in the populated area of Ginowan City and the return of a major proportion of the Northern Training Area in the Yanbaru forest. These plans, however, contained conditions that would in effect lead to further militarisation and environmental destruction of Okinawa.

Construction of US Military Base at Henoko/Oura Bay - Habitat of Endangered Dugong

In 1996, SACO Final Report proposed the relocation of the US Futenma Marine Air Station from the populated area of Ginowan City to the northern part of Okinawa Island. In 1997, Henoko in Nago City was announced as the relocation site.

Henoko and its adjacent Oura Bay are one of the most biodiversity-rich areas in Okinawa. The endangered Okinawa dugong, rare blue corals, and many other rare species, inhabit the area. Furthermore the livelihood of the local communities is closely connected to the environment. The construction and use of the base would have tremendous impact on the environment and as communities.

The construction plan thus immediately met with strong local opposition. Ever since, the Okinawan people have been vehemently opposing the plan, engaging in protest rallies, petitions, and sit-ins. At present, Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima and the mayors of all the municipalities in Okinawa oppose the plan, including any plan in which the relocation site would be within the prefecture.

Okinawa’s opposition to the construction plan has gained international support as well. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)’s Recommendations and Resolution have requested the Japanese and US governments to work together to complete an Environmental Impact Assessment, and to setup appropriate action plans for dugong conservation. In the “dugong lawsuit” of 2008, the US federal court ruled that the US Department of Defense (DoD) violated the US National Historical Preservation Act, which protects indigenous people’s culture and life.

The US and Japanese governments are still forcibly pushing forward with their plan, and the construction plan is now at both a crucial and final stage. In March this year, the Japanese government submitted to Okinawa’s Governor Hirokazu Nakaima its application for reclamation of waters of Henoko and Oura Bay for the base construction. Placed under tremendous pressure from the national government, Governor Nakaima is expected to make his decision regarding the application sometime in December this year or January of next year.

The Okinawan people are engaging in campaigns to help support Governor Nakaima to keep his current stance on the base construction plan and to say “No” to the reclamation application (see Jon Mitchell’s article on the postcard campaign Campaign to prevent the next Battle of Okinawa http://www.japanfocus.org/events/view/186). In addition, during public viewing of the government’s application documents, the Okinawan prefectural government received 3576 letters, including some from overseas, expressing opposition to the construction plan.

Construction of US Military Helipads at Takae

The 1996 SACO Final Report also proposed the return of a major portion of the Northern Training Area of Okinawa Island, with the construction of new helipads in the remaining Northern Training Area, as a condition for its return. However, in 1999 the Takae area, a small community of 160 people, was declared...
Colombia: Pillar of the United States in Latin America

In Colombia in 2009 Álvaro Uribe’s government announced the installation of seven United States military bases, in different military installations of the Colombian Military Forces, through which they could threaten and spy on Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil and the Caribbean. This was with the excuse of supporting the fight against drugs and guerrilla forces in the country. For this, the government made use of an agreement issued in 1962 that established cooperation between the U.S.A. and Colombia for social issues. The announcement produced widespread national condemnation and a widespread movement was formed: the Colombia Coalition NO foundation, which facilitated important counter-mobilisations, adding different actors from civil society, political movements and parties. There was also a strong international rejection, which increased the tension between Colombia and its neighbours, demonstrated in special sessions of UNASUR (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas - Union of South American Nations). A few months later the Colombian Constitutional Court declared the convention with the United States unconstitutional, and demanded that a matter of such magnitude should pass by Congress. The government coalition, in the face such a disturbance, decided not to submit this to the consideration of the Colombian Parliament.

In other places, these events might be seen as extreme, or perhaps they are like the fundamentalist and militant extremism of Álvaro Uribe, but, this in fact this is part of the pattern of Colombian policy, since the Minister of Defence at that time was the current president of the Republic, Juan Manuel Santos. The events brought to attention once again the close relationship of the Colombian government with the Pentagon, the subordination of the Colombian Armed Forces to the interests of the Pentagon, and the high degree of militarization of the country. This is an obstacle for South America’s ability to have an independent military policy and be converted into a region of peace.

During the last Summit of the Americas, held in Cartagena April 2012, President Obama signalled “we have continued investing in programmes like the Colombia Plan, but now we are working with Colombia, considering its best practices around issues such as the security of its citizens, so not only the United States, but also Colombia, provide technical assistance and training to Central American and Caribbean countries, to find ways in which they can duplicate part of the success that we have seen in Colombia”. He has given specific resources so that the Colombian government carries out part of the work advising armies of other countries. In February 2012 the Colombian Minister of Defence, Juan Carlos Pinzón, held a high level meeting in Washington. This was classified as a type of meeting that the United States only holds with countries like South Korea or the United Kingdom, and was designed to prepare a strategy post the Colombia Plan. In April, during a visit to Colombia by León Panetta, ex-defence secretary of the U.S.A., it was revealed that Colombia had trained thousands of Central American and Mexican soldiers, and in a third high-level dialogue held on the 25th and 27th November in Bogotá, the presidential advisor for matters of the Western Hemisphere, Ricardo Zúñiga, said that the meeting had the purpose of “talking about the future of our cooperation in security, because the focus has been for many years on the Colombian internal situation, but now it is more global and regional”. “Now Colombia is playing a larger role than before, collaborating in the region, with Mexico, with Central America and the Caribbean in the fight against organised crime”, he added.

All of this has served to shower Colombia with praise, a country that was rated by Obama as a successful case of the fight against organised crime and worthy of exporting its experience. Just as this military cooperation was being emphasised, in Colombia the darkest years of the hundred rights violations were experienced: the murder of thousands of unarmed citizens presented as guerrillas to obtain rewards, the spread of paramilitary armies, the expulsion of thousands of peasants from their land, the assassinations, amongst many other things. Simultaneously, the increase of direct foreign investment and extractive industries was occurring, particularly the mining industry. The Colombia Plan that involved the expenditure of nearly 4 billion dollars in 10 years was concurrent with all this and did not involve a decrease in the production and trafficking of drugs.

At the start of the Colombia Plan, the total Direct Foreign Investment (DFI) was calculated as $2.4 billion. In 2011, the DFI in Colombia amounted to $14.4 billion, the fastest rate of growth in Latin America. Oil and gas constitute an increasingly important part of the DFI, in excess of around a third in the 1990s, to almost a third in 2010, when it reached $4.3 billion.

In 2008, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) continues on page 8

continued from page 7 as the construction site.

Local people, NGOs, scientists, experts, and international organisations including the IUCN, have been requesting the Japanese government to reconsider the construction plan.

The Yanbaru Forest is one of the richest areas of biodiversity in Japan. It is home to over 1,000 species of higher plants and 5,000 species of animals, including numerous indigenous and endemic species such as the endangered Okinawa Woodpecker and Okinawa Rail. Thirty percent of the forest is however used as a US military training area and 22 US military helicopters already exist in this training area. The construction and use of the new helicopters would certainly create considerable danger to, and have additional impact on the Yanbaru Forest and the Takae community.

It should be emphasised that the Japanese government is also violating the human rights of Takae residents and their supporters. The government filed SLAPP lawsuits (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) against those who were carrying out peaceful protests. The Naha district court ordered, on 14 March, 2012, one of the plaintiffs to stop sit-in protests, thereby approving parts of the Japanese government’s argument. “No Help! Takae Residents’ Society”, a Takae residents’ group, and their lawyers, appealed to a higher court on 27 March, 2012.

The appeal was rejected on 25 June, 2013. Despite the unfair judicial decision, Takae residents and their supporters keep fighting, and appealed to the Supreme Court on 5 July, demanding justice for their right to live in peace and exercise freedom of expression.

Concluding Note

The Okinawan peoples’ actions to save Henoko and Takae are not just about opposing US bases and protecting the environment. The Okinawans have been calling on the US and Japanese governments not to deprive them of their rights to pass on what they call The Island of Peace with its treasured biodiversity to future generations, rather than bequeathing them as militarised islands.

Masami Kawamura
Director, Environmental Policy and Justice, Citizens’ Network for Biodiversity in Okinawa

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Sicily Against War: Resisting the Niscemi US Military Base

On 9 August, an estimated 5,000 people marched to protest against a new United States satellite communications base under construction in Niscemi, Sicily. At the conclusion of the march, a lot of them invaded the base to free eleven peace activists who had climbed antennas inside the day before. This was the latest popular initiative against the US Navy’s project to deploy in Sicily one of the four ground stations for their Mobile User Objective System (MUOS).

The Niscemi US military base (NRTF) is located in a nature reserve (a site of communitarian interest – sic- from 2000) called Sughereta, a natural cork oak forest. In order to protect this natural oasis and the surrounding population’s right to a healthy environment, and in order to denounce the increasing militarisation of Sicilian land by the US Army, thousands of people have been protesting for two years against the MUOS project. Sicilian civil society does not want the MUOS and doesn’t want the use of their land for military purposes. The “No-Muos” group, including women who are fiercely opposed to the plan to build the new military system, blocked the road leading to the military base and cut off soldiers and construction workers’ access to the site. In the face of this, protesters have been brutalised by the Italian police on several occasions and, under the pressure of the US command and of the US government, the Italian government is insisting on supporting the project. The project was authorised, without any sufficient documentation, in 2005 during Silvio Berluscon’s government, but was supported by the later premiers (Prodi, Monti, Letta).

The multibillion-dollar MUOS system is a next-generation narrowband military satellite communication programme, designed to significantly improve ground communication for US forces on the move and to facilitate the employment of “mobile user” warfighters (especially drones) worldwide. MUOS will provide simultaneous voice, video and data capability by leveraging 3G mobile communications technology. It’ll provide 10 times greater communications capacity than the legacy system. The MUOS spacecraft is the first in a satellite communications system that will replace the Ultra High Frequency Follow-On system.

The system consists of five geostationary earth orbit satellites—one an on-orbit spare—and a terrestrial network connecting the ground stations around the world (NRTF Niscemi and the three other US military bases in Virginia, Australia, and Hawaii). The station in Niscemi will be equipped with three parabolic 18.4-metre diameter antennas which transmit in the microwave range, and two 149-metre high helical antennas in the UHF spectrum.

According to a study conducted by physicists Massimo Zucchetti and Massimo Coradu of the Polytechnic University of Turin, the electromagnetic waves emanating from MUOS will spread

Continued on page 7

boasted that “Colombia’s economic takeoff after 2003 didn’t happen by chance.” Fifty-two areas of the Colombian economic system were subject to reform, and under the Colombia Plan, “USAID provided technical assistance to help design and implement policies that range from fiscal reform to the strengthening of the financial sector and to improve the environment for small businesses, and many more.”

This was achieved through a combination of legal reforms and fiscal incentives, the signing of new agreements of free commerce (between Colombia and the United States, as well as between Colombia and Canada) and the militarisation of the mining industry. The U.S.A. trained “energy battalions” to protect pipelines, roads and other infrastructure projects. The well-documented cases of the banana company Chiquita Brands, the mining company Drummond and the oil giant BP, have examined links between paramilitary groups and transnational corporations from the United States. In March 2007 in a court in Washington, DC, representatives of Chiquita Brands were found guilty of having made payments to the paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defence of Colombia, AUC).

“Chiquita made more than 100 payments to the AUC with a value of more than $1.7 million,” according to the U.S.A. Department of Justice “Chiquita Brands paid blood money to terrorists like Carlos Castaño to protect their own financial interests,” according to the law firm that represented the victims.

Despite the abandonment of the agreement for the installation of military bases in Colombia, do not be misled into thinking that the US strategy for the region, or the role the Colombian government wants to play, has changed. Clearly for international opinion, to pass from militant Uribe to diplomatic Santos is quite a leap. But Santos is the president who - when Cristina Kitchner announced the expropriation of 51% of Repsol, in a business unit with the Mexican company Talisman in Bogotá – said, “we don’t expropriate here”.

The United States closely associates military help and a war on drug trafficking with the implementation of a predatory economic model and the signing of a free trade agreement. For example, in the trade cooperation including the EU, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Therefore, the importance that the U.S.A is giving in terms of military cooperation to the countries of the Pacific Agreement demands attention. Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Chile firstly, but also to Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean and to Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala in Central America.

In the last year we have seen the implementation of a military base in Concón in Chile, in Piura in Peru, and new military bases in Panama, five in Honduras, in Puebla in Mexico. What stands out is that immediately after Porfirio Lobo’s coup d’état, Colombia signed a pact of cooperation with Honduras for security, and in the last year has signed similar agreements with Peru, Chile and Mexico.

Finally, and no less despicable, is that Colombia is refining its collaboration with the armed apparatuses of the world, such as the recent agreement that was signed with NATO, a military organisation that intervenes around the world under the interests of the United States and the European powers (remember the cases of Belgrade, Afghanistan, Libya and currently Syria). To insert Colombia in the biggest warmongering club in the world is a disgrace for Colombia, besides being a challenge to integration processes in the region that look for independence from the United States in political, economic and military relationships in the continent. Santos’s declaration has generated distrust and insecurity in Latin American countries that were beginning to advance the consolidation of their own security and defence doctrine that didn’t have the United States as a reference and that Santos’s government always tried to block and delay. This makes clear the alliance between Washington and Bogotá, who’s great agent is the Colombian government led by its president.

Andrés Aristizábal
Colombia No Bases Coalition
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out over 135 kilometres, with serious risk of causing severe degenerative diseases such as leukemia and cancer in the surrounding population. The area, moreover, is already polluted since 1991 by the 41 antennas already housed by the NRTF facility. Finally, the main beam of microwaves emitted by the MUOS antennas would significantly increase the risk of accidental irradiation of aircraft and could cause accidents tens of kilometres away. All these risks have been openly recognised in a decision by the Sicilian Administrative Court, which ratified a provisional halt to the project. The new regional government led by Rosario Crocetta (member of the Democratic party and former communist leader) initially supported the struggle of No Muos Movement and blocked the authorisations to work inside the ecological reserve. At the end of July Crocetta changed his decision and become a supporter of the project. He also accused the peace movement of being sponsored by the mafia. A lot of activists, members of anti-mafia grassroots organisations, denounced him to the judiciary court.

The truth is that the NO MUOS people denounced, time after time, a company from Niscemi which was to carry out most of the field work inside the base, preparing the platform for the MUOS antennas: this company has no anti-mafia certificate (which in Italy is compulsory, to sign any contract). The same company had been working all along without any intervention by either the civil or military authorities, supposed to fork it out. In February 2012, the Senator Giuseppe Lumia (Pd) – politically near to Sicilian President Crocetta - even presented a point of order in the Italian Parliament about this legality problem: the Government never gave an answer. The Member of Parliament Lumia wrote: “by the DDA (Antimafia District Directory) investigations, Vincenzo Piazza, owner of the company, was linked to the well-known boss of the Giugno-Arceito clan, Giancarlo Giugno”.

Journalists, politicians and local administrators denounced some heavy mafia threats towards NO MUOS people.

The regular presence that the No Muos activists continue to maintain in the small town of Niscemi (30,000 inhabitants) is the only way to try to stop the works. Thanks to all the citizens who have answered the call, we are continuing the protest of the base US-Navy-8, but the repressive action against people that simply want to regain their sovereignty is strong. On 6 March the NO MUOS mother were at the base: some of them have been dragged forcibly by the police in order to allow some Americans soldiers to cross. Unfortunately, one of the mother has even been hospitalised. It was a similar scene to the one that happened on 11 January, when some activists blocking the access to the base were attacked and injured by almost 100 policemen. On 22 April, 4 activists, two young men and two young women, cut the fence of the US base and they climbed on the giant antennas that were in operation. Police, military and firefigters went there to persuade them to get down. Two of them were arrested and accused of aggravated damage, resisting a public officer, and being disruptively present on a military site.

One month ago, twenty US intellectuals, professor and researchers (Noam Chomsky, Linda Alcoff, Dick Walker, Chris Hedges, etc) signed a public appeal to ask the Obama administration to immediately stop the installation of the MUOS station in Niscemi. They also firmly condemned the brutalisation of the protesters and expressed their solidarity with Sicilian civil society protesting against the MUOS.

Antonio Mazzeo

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**WRI's Electronic Council meeting**

**20 - 30 September 2013**

This year, WRI’s Council will be held as an electronic meeting. In the draft agenda (below), you’ll see topics such as the links between extractive industries and armed conflict, an exchange on the place of nonviolence in training and the contemporary challenges that face antimilitarists and pacifists.

Unlike in previous eCouncils, this agenda includes not only forum or email discussions, but also webinars, video contributions, conference calls, forums and an online ‘café’ space. We want to ensure this eCouncil is as interesting and engaging as possible through this variety of formats, but ultimately the dynamism of the meeting will of course come from us all — the participants.

As in a physical Council meeting, in the eCouncil there will be two kinds of topics: discussion topics (on political questions, on WRI’s programme work, etc.) and formal decision-making topics. All the decision-making topics are placed in the agenda within the same three-day period (27-29 September). We ask all Council members to make a special effort to take part in this part of eCouncil, but will of course welcome your participation in all other discussions as well.
Mexico – so far from peace, so close to the United States

The ‘War against Drugs’ erupted in Mexico at the end of 2006 when Felipe Calderón, just 10 days into his presidency, launched the joint operation ‘Michoacán’ to fight organised crime. It has resulted in at least 60,000 deaths from executions, confrontations between drug gangs and narcoterrorists and battles with federal forces. This preliminary statistic is considered ‘official’. But independent research shows that from 2006 to 2012 there were 136,000 deaths: 116,000 victims of the war against drugs, 20,000 of common crime, and an additional 26,000 disappearances. Assassinations and forced disappearances continue with the new President Enrique Peña Nieto. In his first 6 months, the death toll adds up to 6,250 about 1,000 deaths per month. Investigating these crimes has a very high cost. Mexico is the fifth most dangerous country for journalists in the world, and according to a United Nations report on the freedom of expression, the most dangerous in all of the Americas. In the first six years of the ‘War against Drugs’ 56 journalists were murdered and 16 disappeared. Others have been displaced or forced into exile under threat of death.

The economic cost of the war

In addition to the death toll, the war also brought an increase in spending on public security. Among the first decisions of Enrique Peña Nieto was to increase the Secretariat of National Defense’s budget by US$500 million for the purchase of arms and ‘improving operational schemes in the integrated combat against drug trafficking’ and ‘to make the activities aimed at eradicating, intercepting and fighting organised crime more efficient’. Mexico’s military spending is relatively low, 0.4% of its GDP. But various entities benefit from the money destined for the war. The federal government has created an additional fund called the “States and Federal District’s Public Security Support Fund” (known in Spanish as FASP – El Fondo de Aportaciones para la Seguridad Pública de los Estados y del Distrito Federal) with 600 million US dollars for the 32 Mexican states and capital district. The objectives of FASP are the ‘recruitment, training, selection, evaluation and filtration of human resources involved in the tasks of public security’ and the equipping federal and state police forces, establishment and operation of a national telecommunications and information network for public security, etc. The opacity of the execution of this fund has been criticised by non-governmental organisations who indicate that the lack of transparency will increase the mistrust of public security forces. In 2010, according to Latinobarómetro, eight out of ten Mexicans distrust the police. The perception of corruption amongst the police is confirmed day after day in the news.

Self-defense and/or community police

If the level of distrust is very high in the capital, in the rural areas it tends towards complete mistrust. Several cases of organised crime having infiltrated the public security structures have been proven. As a result, in states with high organised crime activity like Michoacán and Guerrero, community police groups have sprung up under the banner of ‘self-defence’, which has alarmed the government and the public in general because of the similarities with armed self-defence forces in Colombia. The feeling of abandonment by or inefficacy of the security forces has brought about the creation of the community police in Guerrero at the start of 2013. In July ‘drug traffickers’ compelled more than 1,000 people to abandon their homes in three communities. Three days of gunshots, the murder of the local Public Security subdirector, kidnappings and property destruction provoked the exodus of the local population who decided not to cooperate with the drug traffickers’ demands for freedom of movement in their area.

In April 2013, the governor, Ángel Aguirre and self-defence leaders signed a pact looking for some way to legalise the community police and define the type of weapons they could carry. This did not please the federal government, who want to have a monopoly on the use of armed force, especially high calibre weaponry. On the 5th of August in Costa Chica in Guerrero state, the army disarmed and detained 2 members of the self-defence forces for carrying high calibre weapons. Later a military convoy with 100 soldiers was taken hostage for more than 24 hours while the self-defence forces demanded the release of their two colleagues and accused the army captain of links to organised crime. In the state of Michoacán, the self-defence forces have come about in a different environment. After constant confrontations between two gangs, ‘vigilantes’ have emerged, who are accused of cooperating with Jalisco’s New Generation cartel. After 34 members of the self-defence forces in the municipality of Buenavista Tomatlan were detained, the community accused the police of acting on the side of the ‘Caballeros Templarios Michoacanos’ (Michoacan Knights Templar), the dominant cartel in the region. Michoacán is the hottest zone in the country, especially since 28 July 2013 when a Marine admiral and his bodyguard were killed in an ambush.

Migrants, the invisible victims

In addition to Mexicans themselves, people who pass through the country are also victims of the armed conflict. The majority of migrants are Central Americans who flee economic desperation or threats from the maras, gangs linked to the Zetas. Between 2006 and 2012 more than a million undocumented migrants entered Mexico through the southern border, with the majority intending to arrive at the northern border, where the coyotes await, charging 10,000 Mexican pesos (about US$800) to take them to the other side of the border. From their countries of origin it can cost up to US$3000.

A large proportion of the undocumented immigrants, lacking legal protections, are easy prisoners for the cartels that control vast territories and migration routes in Mexico. The families of kidnapped migrants face extortion, and even though in many cases they do pay for their family member’s freedom, often they never hear from the person again. According to the Mexican congressional Chamber of Deputies, some 6000 migrants disappear each year while crossing Mexico en route to the United States. One especially horrific case was the discovery of 72 murdered migrants on a ranch in Tamaulipas in August 2010, after an armed confrontation between the Mexican Navy and organised crime groups.

Many kidnapped migrants end up being mules: couriers for transporting drugs into US territory. The US border patrols detain about 400,000 people each year. Many people die along the way after 3 or 4 days walking through the desert in Arizona or New Mexico. According to the Washington Office on Latin America, 463 migrants died just in the period from September 2011 to September 2012.

‘The most militarised border in the world’ or the border with the largest flow of arms?

The US response has been the creation of a border wall which will be more than 1100 Km long and will separate Mexico from the United States. According to former US presidential candidate John
McCain, it will be longer than the Berlin Wall and will become the most militarised border in the world. Many experts on both sides of the border believe that the wall will not resolve the immigration problem. In addition, ecologists warn that it will also obstruct animal migration since it will divide their natural habitat in half. The exact cost of building the wall is not known, but there will be US$13 billion dedicated exclusively to ‘improving the southern border strategy’, and in addition to the current 21,000 border agents there will be another 19,000 added.

While drugs and migrants head north, arms cross from the US to the south. The Ex-president of Mexico, Felipe Calderón, urged the US to stop the flow of arms and money to criminal groups, noting that of 100,000 arms seized during his presidency, 90% came from the US side of the border. But according to WikiLeaks, the US government insists that ‘the most powerful and lethal weapons illegally purchased by Mexican organised criminals, which include high-calibre military-type arms, don’t enter via the border that divides the two countries but rather originate in the arsenals of Central American military forces and are smuggled in through the southern border via crossings that are badly protected and poorly guarded by the local and federal Mexican authorities.’

Nonetheless, the Mexican cities that border the United States are the most violent, with the highest number of homicides. In 2011 there were 2086 murders in Ciudad Juárez alone, and although in 2012 the number decreased to 750, it was still the highest in the country. Mexico: Beautiful and armed to the teeth

In Mexico, the presence of people with weapons is normal. The military cruise main avenues in their trucks - even in tourist areas. Local police patrol the street with shotguns, and federal police with high-caliber weapons patrol in the back of their pick-up trucks. The innumerable members of private security companies can literally be seen on every corner guarding banks and even shops. In contrast with the police, the population has a lot of confidence in the Navy (79%) and the Army (75%).

Some civil society organisations demand that strict controls be placed on firearms. Amongst them is the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity, led by the Mexican poet Javier Sicilia who, after his son was murdered by members of organised crime, called for Mexican society to protest against the violence perpetrated by these groups, but also against the violence carried out by police and law enforcement agencies. In 2012, Sicilia organised a tour called the ‘Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity’ through 25 US cities, in order to tell people in the US about the consequences of the ‘war on drugs’ for people in Mexico and the humanitarian catastrophe that it has created. The caravan concluded in in Washington, DC, which Sicilia saw as ‘an end point but also a beginning’.

Mexican artist Pedro Reyes, for his part, organised actions for converting decommissioned arms into things that would serve the community. One of the projects was ‘stakes for pistols’, which transformed 1527 guns into 1527 stakes for the planting of 1527 trees.14 Later, the artist organised two more actions named ‘Imagine’ and ‘Disarm’ in which the decommissioned arms were converted into musical instruments.

Family members of people who have disappeared organise protests and marches through the main avenues of Mexico City, and frequently organise occupying encampments in front of federal institutions that they consider responsible for not providing security to citizens, demanding urgent actions to find their family members who have been forcibly disappeared.

However, many alternative social movements view self-organised armed groups with sympathy, especially those linked to indigenous communities. There is the feeling that anti-militarism and pacifism, in their most orthodox forms, don’t find fertile ground in Mexico. But it ultimately depends on us and whether or not we try to make possible what currently seems impossible.

Igor Seke
New in the WRI webinar

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Through articles, images, survey data and interviews, Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter It documents the seeds of war that are planted in the minds of young people in many different countries. However, it also explores the seeds of resistance to this militarisation that are being sown resiliently and creatively by numerous people. We hope the book will help to disseminate these latter seeds. It is not just a book for peace and antimalist activists: it is a book for parents and grandparents, teachers, youth workers, and young people themselves.

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Owen Everett
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2013
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Conscientious objectors are generally seen as male — as are soldiers. This book breaks with this assumption. Women conscientiously object to military service and militarism. Not only in countries which conscript women — such as Eritrea and Israel — but also in countries without conscription of women. In doing so, they redefine antimilitarism from a feminist perspective, opposing not only militarism, but also a form of antimilitarism that creates the male conscientious objector as the ‘hero’ of antimilitarist struggle. This anthology includes contributions by women conscientious objectors and activists from Britain, Colombia, Eritrea, Israel, Paraguay, South Korea, Turkey, and the USA, plus documents and statements.

Published by: War Resisters’ International
Edited by Ellen Elster and Majken Jul Sørensen
Preface by Cynthia Enloe

Social change doesn’t just happen. It’s the result of the work of committed people striving for a world of justice and peace. This work gestates in groups or cells of activists, in discussions, in training sessions, in reflecting on previous experiences, in planning, in experimenting and in learning from others. Preparing ourselves for our work for social justice is key to its success. There is no definitive recipe for successful nonviolent actions and campaigns. This handbook, however, is a series of resources that can inspire and support your own work, especially if you adapt the resources to your own needs and context.

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The Broken Rifle

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